

28 March 2010

Mayor Johnson says 4,300 premature deaths a year in London are linked to long-term exposure to dangerous airborne particles at an annual cost of up to £2 billion

Mayor of London has today joined Parliament's cross-party Environmental Audit Committee in calling on the Government to commit the resources necessary to reduce the enormous burden air pollution places on organisations such as the NHS and to implement national measures where they are most effective

Mayor Johnson has made improving air quality in London a General Election issue by 'throwing the gauntlet down' and sending the Government a wish list of 14 measures it needs to take

Mayor Johnson publishes his draft Air Quality Strategy for public consultation

Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, has today published his draft Air Quality Strategy, 'Clearing the Air', for public consultation. See media release (with a link to the full document):

<http://www.london.gov.uk/publication/mayors-draft-air-quality-strategy>

The consultation period will run until 20 June 2010.

Quotes

Simon Birkett, Founder of the Campaign for Clean Air in London, said:

"Mayor Johnson's estimate of some 4,300 premature deaths a year in London due to long-term exposure to dangerous airborne particles is far higher than unofficial estimates produced late last year by the Campaign for Clean Air in London^{Note}. This is truly shocking news when compared to 2,600 deaths nationally due to road traffic accidents.

"Unlike the Government though, which has failed to publish or 'covered-up' a similar estimate for London and the UK as a whole, at least the Mayor is warning people about the full health impact of poor air quality. The Government's omission represents one of the biggest public health failings or 'cover-ups' in modern history.

"Boris has made action on air quality a General Election issue by 'throwing the gauntlet down' to the Government by joining today with Parliament's cross-party Environmental Audit Committee in calling on the Government to play its part finally in improving London's awful air quality.

"However, Mayor Johnson's draft Air Quality Strategy, which includes 14 measures he wants the Government to take, represents more of a 'wish list' itself than a strategy to address one of the biggest public health crises in London. How many premature deaths will actually be avoided each year if the Mayor's committed measures are implemented?

"The Mayor has published a 'wish list' not a strategy. He clearly:

- wishes he could delay compliance with laws for dangerous airborne particles (PM₁₀) until 2011 instead of 2010 as required following the European Commission's rejection of the

Government's application for a time extension last December

- wishes the Government would fund and implement 14 of the most important measures needed to improve air quality in London
- wishes the UK didn't need to comply with hourly legal standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) which were breached in London for a whole year less than a month after entering into force on 1 January 2010
- wishes annual mean NO₂ didn't need to stay below 60 micrograms per cubic metre from January 2010 even if the UK gets a time extension until January 2015
- wishes removing the western extension of the congestion charging zone (WEZ) wouldn't result in new breaches of the daily legal standard for PM₁₀ in Brompton Road
- wishes the Government will fail to spot he is planning to sacrifice tens of millions of pounds of income (and making air quality worse) by removing the WEZ at the same time he is asking the Government for money and putting up bus fares
- wishes the weather was always mild and wet and London didn't have hot summers like 2003 which is estimated to have resulted, in London, in an additional 46 to 212 premature deaths due to ozone and 85 from dangerous airborne particles
- wishes his ideas for action by 2020 would be enough to protect Londoners now and avoid embarrassment at the London 2012 Olympics

"The first ever official estimate in the UK for the full health impact of poor air quality must mark the start of much more vigorous efforts by the Mayor and the Government, working together, to protect our health.

ENDS

Note:

The Mayor says his estimate of premature deaths includes those due to all particles (i.e. including non- human sources) whereas the Campaign for Clean Air in London's estimate of 3,460 in 2005 included only those due to anthropogenic sources (i.e. human sources). The Government recently estimated the non- anthropogenic level at just 1.418 micrograms per cubic metre in 2008.